

**Paul Scully**

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

**Jihad Dib**Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government  
Minister for Emergency Services  
Minister for Youth Justice**Media Release****Managing the threat of extreme weather before disaster strikes****Friday, 23 February 2024**

The NSW Government is today releasing the nation's first State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP), developed by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

The plan reveals the cost of building and infrastructure damage from natural disasters could hit \$9.1 billion per year by 2060 if mitigation steps are not taken, as more frequent and severe events take an increased toll on homes, businesses and government infrastructure.

This is up from an estimated average annual cost of damage at \$3.1 billion per year in NSW.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority was established following the 2022 NSW Independent Flood Inquiry, led by Professor Mary O'Kane and Mick Fuller.

The State Disaster Mitigation Plan was issued pursuant to the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022, which requires the NSW Reconstruction Authority to prepare and implement a state disaster mitigation plan to provide guidance about the mitigation of disasters across NSW.

The Plan outlines how the rising costs of disasters can be addressed by refocusing government policy towards risk-reducing actions, and details how government agencies can work together to help communities prepare for worsening bushfires, heatwaves, floods, storms and coastal erosion.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority will help coordinate delivery of the actions to improve community resilience and mitigate against disasters.

Since 2019, NSW residents have endured over 65 declared disasters, costing taxpayers more than \$6 billion, with more than 20,000 homes damaged in 2022 alone.

Climate change is expected to increase the severity and frequency of natural disasters.

The SDMP includes a toolkit of measures to reduce communities' exposure and vulnerability to disasters through awareness and preparedness campaigns, evacuation infrastructure and warning systems.

The actions include:

- Boosting the State's "Get Ready" preparedness campaigns to ensure communities are better equipped.
- Building a new local government toolkit to guide councils in preparing for disasters and the impacts of climate change.
- Developing local Disaster Adaptation Plans that will help communities become more aware and prepared and will inform future planning processes and rebuilding and reconstruction efforts after a disaster occurs.

- Developing early warning systems so communities are better prepared when disaster strikes.
- Identifying mitigation infrastructure strategies and approaches to funding.
- Working with industry to review building codes to factor in greater building resilience through materials and design.
- Reviewing insurance levy arrangements and working with the insurance sector to factor in affordability in adaption planning.

The first three local Disaster Adaptation Plans are currently being developed for the Northern Rivers and Hawkesbury Nepean, while work will commence soon for a Central West plan.

In developing the SDMP, detailed analysis was undertaken to determine the biggest threats to NSW. The results showed that storms and floods present the highest risk to homes, businesses and infrastructure, while heatwaves and bushfires present the greatest risk to life.

Research for the plan shows the top 20 local government areas in NSW currently most at risk from multiple hazards are the Central Coast, Tweed, Clarence Valley, Ballina, Northern Beaches, Penrith, Hawkesbury, Sydney, Lake Macquarie, Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Sutherland Shire, Newcastle, Bayside, Liverpool, Wollongong, Parramatta, Lismore, Shoalhaven and the Inner West.

The authority will deliver the next State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP) in 2026, which will identify projects for the longer term.

A copy of the plan can be viewed on the [NSW Reconstruction Authority](#) website from 9am AEST.

**Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Paul Scully said:**

“Historically, the state’s ability to prevent and prepare for disasters hasn’t worked as there has been only three per cent of funding spent on prevention and 97 per cent spent after an event.

“But we know that every dollar we invest in better preparing communities reduces future costs and will help make communities more resilient.

“The cost of inaction is too great: we need to better prepare and plan for disasters so we can lessen the burden on our communities. It gives us the tools we need to make better, more informed decisions about planning, so we can deliver more resilient homes away from areas of high-risk.

“This is our opportunity to build better so that we can better deal with disasters that come and equip communities with what they need.”

**Minister Emergency Services Jihad Dib said:**

“We’re shifting the dial in how we address disasters as well as making sure we do not inadvertently put people in harm’s way through bad planning decisions. For the first time, NSW finally has a plan to begin turning that around with information on how we can invest in reducing risks before disasters occur to better protect communities.

“Successive years of unprecedented natural disasters have highlighted the need for NSW to meet the challenges of the future by working to reduce both the actual and social costs of natural hazards to our communities. The first-ever State Disaster Mitigation Plan outlines the actions NSW collectively needs to take to reduce the risks our communities face, from bushfires and floods to storms and coastal hazards.

“There is no easy or simple solution to these challenges. The focus of the State Disaster Mitigation Plan is to provide a framework and clear actions for reducing risk where we can, and adapting where we can’t, through improved warning systems and a focus on resilient infrastructure.

“The increasing risk of natural disasters also increases pressure on our emergency services staff and volunteers, who put themselves on the line keeping communities safe. This plan will help to manage that risk by reducing the impact of disasters before they occur.”

**Deputy CEO of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Simone Walker said:**

“The NSW Reconstruction Authority is the first entity of its kind in NSW with the dual responsibility of proactively reducing the impact of future disasters before they happen, as well as responding after.

“This milestone plan gives NSW communities the first ever roadmap to reduce the risk of future disasters.

“This is critical because every dollar we invest in reducing risks will help people recover faster and reduce the cost of future disasters.”

**MEDIA:**

**Kate Bryant | Minister Scully | 0455 609 661**

**Mark Scala | Minister Dib | 0414 746 651**